

Genesis 30:1-13. *Jacob is busy—cow yes, ewe no.* Rachel was not only barren, but Leah's fertility created sibling rivalry of the highest order. Kvetching to husband Jacob, she said give me children or I'll die. Jacob was not happy with his beautiful but less than adoring wife Rachel—is it me who's stopped you from getting pregnant, or is it the Lord our God?

Rachel's solution: Hey, screw my maidservant Bilhah so I can build a family through her. So she gave Bilhah to her husband and sure enough, Dan (i.e., *he has vindicated*) was born. And again Bilhah conceived, this time Rachel named the son Naphtali (i.e., *my struggle*). She congratulated herself—I've beaten my sister—I've won!

Well, Leah could not be left behind so she offered Jacob Zilpah to fool around with, and Gad (i.e., *good fortune*) was born. And again Zilpah and Jacob did the deed—Leah was pleased with the result and named the boy Asher (i.e., *happy*).

- Q Why was it useful to equate barrenness with God's disfavor?
- Q To what extent was Rachel's solution to infertility immoral; or, was it a moral solution given the context and times of the era?
- Q Under what circumstances would you encourage your spouse to have sex with another person?
- Q What's the worst argument you've had with your sister? And your husband—what was the topic?

GENESIS 30:1-13

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

²Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"

³Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family."

⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, ⁵and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan [*he has vindicated*].

⁷Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali [*my struggle*].

⁹When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

¹¹Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"[or *A troop is coming*] So she named him Gad [*good fortune or a troop*].

¹²Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

¹³Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher [*happy*].

Genesis 30:14-24. Getting Pregnant via Mandrake. During the wheat harvest, Reuben went out and found some fertility enhancing plants called mandrakes; he dutifully gave them to his mother, Leah. Apparently the Ewe noticed the Cow's mandrake plants and asked for some of them. Leah was not pleased—is it not enough you've stolen my husband, and now you want Reuben's mandrake plants as well?

Rachel was not stopped—tell you what. You can sleep with Jacob in return for Reuben's mandrakes. Sure enough, when Jacob got home from the fields, Leah confronted him and said you've got to have sex with me; I've hired you to do so by my son's mandrakes. Jacob did as he was told by Leah; another son was born Issachar [*reward?*]. They kept at it, and another son was born, Zebulun [*honor?*]. Then later, a daughter was born Dinah [*justice*].

After all this begetting, "God remembered Rachel." He *listened to her* and she then became pregnant to a son. She said God has taken away my disgrace! I will call him *May He Add* (i.e., "Joseph").

And she asked the Lord God Yahweh to add to her another son.

- Q Why was Reuben looking for mandrake plants?
- Q Why did the Lord our God obey Leah's request for a child? [v 17] And Rachel (v 22)?
- Q What do we do today to women who can't have children? Names? Attitudes? Values? Assignment of God's providence?

GENESIS 30:14-24

During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

15But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?"

"Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

16So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night.

17God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband." So she named him Issachar [possibly *reward*].

19Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

20Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun [probably *honor*].

21Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah [*justice*].

22Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. 23She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." 24She named him Joseph [*may he add*], and said, "May the LORD add to me another son."



Genesis 30:25-43. Jacob cheats Laban. After Rachel gives birth to Joseph (*May He Add*), Jacob asks Uncle Laban for his freedom. I've worked for you a lot, and want to go back to my homeland. Uncle asked him to stay—Yahweh has blessed me because of you. So, name your price, and I'll pay it.

Jacob agrees, but asks that his holdings be increased as well. Don't pay me anything, just let me cull out all the speckled or spotted sheep and goats—they'll be my wages. Any goat or sheep that's not spotted will be considered stolen—you can check it out.

Uncle Laban agreed and even separated all the speckled or spotted sheep & goats for Jacob and put a 3-day journey distance between his flock and Jacob's.

Jacob had other ideas—he took a whole branch of poplar, almond and plane tree spotted bark over the areas where the flocks would drink. Sure enough, the flocks who were in heat would copulate in front of the branches and produce streaked/speckled/spotted offspring. He also made sure only the strong animals were allowed to mate in front of the spotted branches.

Yep, Jacob grew enormously prosperous, coming to own large flocks, lots of servants, and camels and donkeys.

- Q Why did the Lord our God allow Jacob's superstition to grow his wealth?
- Q Why did Holy Spirit inspire the writer to record/document this incident?
- Q How do you ensure that the business you do in your life is beyond spotted sheep machinations?

GENESIS 30:25-43

After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. ²⁶Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."

²⁷But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that [or possibly, *have become rich and*] the LORD has blessed me because of you."

²⁸He added, "Name your wages, and I will pay them."

²⁹Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. ³⁰The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?"

³¹"What shall I give you?" he asked.

"Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: ³²Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. ³³And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen."

³⁴"Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." ³⁵That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. ³⁶Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

³⁷Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches.

³⁸Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, ³⁹they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. ⁴⁰Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, ⁴²but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. ⁴³In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.